



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 24, 2011

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Paula Freund

Press Secretary

Office of Mayor Greg Ballard – City of Indianapolis

[paula.freund@indy.gov](mailto:paula.freund@indy.gov); C: (317) 464-7112

[www.indy.gov](http://www.indy.gov) - [Newsletter](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Twitter](#) - [Flickr](#)

## **MAYOR BALLARD ANNOUNCES APPROVAL OF CHARTER SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES**

*DAMAR Charter Academy plans to open this fall with 150 students*

INDIANAPOLIS – Mayor Greg Ballard today announced that he has approved the application of DAMAR Charter Academy, which if ratified by the City-County Council, will open in the fall of 2011.

DAMAR Charter Academy seeks to provide an additional option for students with significant developmental challenges. While the school will be open to any student who wants to attend, DAMAR Charter Academy will specialize in serving students with significant cognitive, behavioral, or developmental challenges, including those on the autism spectrum. Through a plan that emphasizes research-based approaches to individualized and relevant learning, DAMAR Charter Academy seeks to maximize the life prospects for students in academic, communication, behavioral and daily living skills. In its first year, the school will serve 150 students in grades K-12, and it will grow to eventually serve a maximum of 400 students. The school will be operated by DAMAR Services, Inc. and located on their grounds at 6067 Decatur Boulevard in Indianapolis.

DAMAR Services, Inc. has been providing specialized education and behavioral support services for children and adults with significant developmental and behavioral challenges for more than 43 years. Today, DAMAR Services serves more than 1,200 individuals on a daily basis with more than 96 percent of individuals served going on to live more independent lives. DAMAR Services has operated an accredited residential school serving more than 200 children on a daily basis for more than 15 years. Programming for students in the residential school will not change. DAMAR Charter Academy will serve students with similar challenges as the residential school but who do not require a residential placement.

“I congratulate DAMAR Services, Inc. for their dedication in meeting the needs of a very important group of students in our community,” said Mayor Ballard. “I also thank the City-County Council for the bipartisan support the school has received thus far and for their consideration of a high-quality proposal that will meet a huge unmet need in our city.”

The Mayor’s announcement follows a rigorous evaluation process by the Indianapolis Charter School Board, led by former Lieutenant Governor John Mutz. The Board held multiple televised public meetings and

thoroughly scrutinized the application over a five-month period with the assistance of the Mayor's charter school staff and external experts in curriculum, governance, and finance. Recordings of the public meetings and the school's application are all available on the City's website at [www.indy.gov](http://www.indy.gov). The school's proposal will be introduced at today's City-County Council meeting.

Students attending DAMAR Charter Academy will receive individualized plans for their education developed by the Education Support Team (EST). Each EST will include the student, the parent(s), the classroom teacher, a behavioral health professional, and a number of direct care support professionals that are present each day in the classroom setting to assist with academic and behavioral progress. The school will operate on a year-round schedule providing extended school year support to ensure that newly learned skills are maintained.

Charter schools are independent public schools that have control over their own curriculum, staffing, organization and budget. In exchange for this authority, they must meet the highest academic standards. Twenty-two Mayor-sponsored charter schools are currently in operation. For more information on Mayor-sponsored charter schools, visit [www.indy.gov/mayor/charter](http://www.indy.gov/mayor/charter).

###